



ADOT's I-17 plans surprise some BCC residents

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BB/CCN Photo/Diana Baker

Alison Atwater and Kelly Powell of Bumble Bee explain the Arizona Department of Transportation's proposal for the eight-lane highway and their savebumblebee.org Web site established to keep the public informed.

The first Black Canyon City Community Association meeting since June drew a large audience due to information posted in town and by word of mouth about the Arizona Department of Transportation's proposed eight-lane highway in the area.

Although ADOT held open meetings on the proposals and the Big Bug carried a headline article recently on the ADOT-favored route, many attending this meeting were not aware of ADOT's proposal.

The current ADOT "preferred" route is Alternative H - which would travel Maggie Mine Road north of Black Canyon City, continue through the canyon area and Bumble Bee and merge back with I-17 near Bloody Basin Road.

The January ADOT meeting in BCC indicated that although there were nine alternatives for the highway improvement, ADOT was only considering a three for future routes.

Alternative A would add lanes to the existing freeway, Alternative D would add lanes to the median and west side of the freeway and Alternative E would add lanes west of the existing freeway.

ADOT was not considering Alternative H as a viable alternative at that time. However, sometime between January and July, ADOT has made this the preferred route for a new eight-lane bypass highway.

Guest speakers Alison Atwater and Kelly Powell of Bumble Bee presented information on the proposed highway route and the impact to the surrounding area.

Together they have set up a web site to keep the public informed of ADOT's intentions.

At the beginning of her presentation Atwater said, "This is a completely biased presentation. I don't want our desert, riparian areas, our community destroyed. The canyon community consists of BCC, Bumble Bee, Turkey Creek, Cleator, Crown King, Cordes and Mayer and this proposed highway would cut right through and destroy us."

Atwater advised that everyone needs to send in comments via email or letter to voice their opinions.

"This is not 'set in stone' yet and now is the time to change ADOT'S mind about this route," Atwater said. She pointed out that previous public comment changed ADOT'S proposals for seven roundabouts in the Cordes Junction area.

The audience voiced concerns about the impact on emergency services and increased air, noise and litter pollution. Several people said they had contacted the ADOT's Public Involvement Coordinator, Kristin Darr-Bornstein and felt ADOT was not considering their concerns.

The Black Canyon Trail Coalition and BCCCA both oppose this alternative. Bob Cothorn, BCCCA president, said ADOT has offered to schedule local meetings to present the alternative information.

Much of the land involved is Bureau of Land Management public land. BLM has indicated they were asked by ADOT to widen their existing utility corridor to accommodate the proposed highway. This is not consistent with BLM'S current Resource Draft Management Plan.

BLM has indicated the proposed Agua Fria and Bradshaw-Harquehala Plan should be available this month. BLM has expanded the utility and transportation corridors because of the Transwestern Pipeline and ADOT proposals. Because BLM is the predominant land owner in the corridor they will be coordinating closely with any proposals to develop design features that minimize the potential fragmentation of the wildlife, cultural, recreation, mining and grazing resources and uses.